



TOWN OF STONINGTON

SELECTMAN'S OFFICE
DANIELLE CHESEBROUGH
FIRST SELECTMAN

152 Elm Street • Stonington, Connecticut 06378
(860) 535-5050

November 2021 Municipal Update

Dear Stonington,

There have been many positive happenings in Town thanks to the dedicated work of many of our Town staff, elected officials, volunteers and our extensive nonprofit and business community. As we continue to work towards creating a new municipal Newsletter, we will share our monthly updates in this blog for the time being. Last month we focused on highlighting a few, specific community interest projects. This month, we have worked with our various Departments to provide an overview of some of the work taking place within your local, municipal government.

We appreciate your feedback and ideas on this communication. We are also always happy to set-up a time to connect in-person or on a call to discuss any existing projects, new ideas or areas of concern.

Thank you,

Danielle

Assessment Department

The data mailers for the 2022 Revaluation have been mailed to all residential property owners. The Department of Assessment respectfully requests that every property owner confirm that the information is accurate, or if it is not, make whatever changes necessary and return it to the Assessment Department.

Any property that does NOT return a signed data mailer **WILL BE** visited and inspected by a data collector. Any inspection needed because a data mailer was not returned will cost the Town an additional \$27 per property. Please help the Town reduce the costs of this important project.

Properties that have recently sold or have active building permits will also be inspected by data collectors. All Revaluation Personnel carry identification and are registered with both the Town and the Police Department. If you have any questions, please contact the Department of Assessment at 860-535-5098.

Building

The Building Department received the honor of being recognized by the Home Builders & Remodelers Association of CT with a [2021 HOBBI Award](#). Stonington received ‘**The Most Responsive Town During Covid**’ award! We are very grateful to the many people who made this award possible.

We are also again on pace for a record-breaking year in terms of building permits. In 2018, we had 1816 building permits within the Town and each year this number has grown steadily. We are already close to 2,000 permits for 2021 and the year is not yet over.

First Selectman’s Office

This month we had the honor in participating in many touching tributes to our Veterans. Thanks to the generosity of many local businesses and organizations, including our hosts at Saltwater Farm Vineyards, we held a highly successful raffle fundraiser and have now surpassed \$70,000 in donations. We have many volunteers to thanks, but a massive amount of thanks is due to Stacey Haskell who has been spearheading this project. We have one additional fundraiser left for 2021, with ‘Special Experience’ raffles on sale until December 16th. You can read more [here](https://www.stonington-ct.gov/selectmens-office/news/help-us-honor-our-veterans). <https://www.stonington-ct.gov/selectmens-office/news/help-us-honor-our-veterans>

I also had the pleasure of joining a number of wonderful community events- ranging from the Hartford Healthcare 10k to helping the Ocean Community Chamber launch the new tradition of the lighting of the Stonington Lobster Trap Tree, which nicely compliments the Mystic Chamber’s Annual Lighted Boat Parade. Another true highlight of the month was having the chance to meet with a group of local girl scouts working on their public service badge. I also worked with DPW, and our Tree Warden, on the “Urban Forestry Grant” application, where I learned a great deal about the many benefits of trees in our community (spoiler alert- there were so many more benefits than I ever realized!).

Other highlights included a chance to meet and share ideas with the City of Greenwich’s Planning and Zoning Commission to engage with residents who have been leading an effort to design and construct a living shoreline in their neighborhood, as well as joining other officials from around the State in discussing topics ranging from municipal human services to state-wide economic development initiatives at the CT Conference of Municipalities annual event.

We worked with the WPCA on submitting a grant for improvements identified by the first phase of the I&I study through the Communities Challenge Grant Program. The next phase for this grant is due in mid-January, and then we will know if we are selected around March-April 2022.

Preparations for the next fiscal year's budget are already underway. Thanks to our Finance and Administrative Services Departments we had a successful internal half-day CIP meeting to review over \$9 million in CIP requests from both the municipal and school budgets. It was a highly collaborative process,

I have also worked with Avalonia and Trust for Public Land (TPL) on a fact sheet for any resident who would like more information on the ongoing conservation effort of approximately 224 acres off of Al Harvey Road in Stonington. You will be able to find this overview on our site by the end of the week.

Human Services

SUPPORTIVE PROGRAMS

Heating Assistance Applications Now Being Taken. TVCCA's Energy Assistance Program helps families and individuals pay their home heating bills. Priority is given to "vulnerable households" with young children, elderly or disabled individuals. Please e-mail to: energyassistance@stonington-ct.gov, or call (860) 535-5015, and an application packet can be sent to you to complete and return along with required documentation, or make an in-person appointment to meet with one of our case managers. Since the beginning of the 2021 program season in August, Stonington Human Services has processed 112 applications.

Mental Health & Wellness. All counseling sessions and support groups are held at Stonington Human Services and are provided at no cost to Stonington residents. Interested in a support group that is not currently in place? Please let us know! Email to: LTheodore@stonington-ct.gov or call (860) 535-5083.

HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

The Human Services Department has a wide variety of programs/events to celebrate the season: Letters to Santa (he's promised to personally answer via US Mail!) – Second Annual Stonington Holiday Decorating Contest – Gifts from the Heart (Take & Make Series) – Winter Boot Drive – Stuff-A-Cruiser / Santa's Workshop Toy Donations, partnership with the Stonington PD. Follow the Stonington Human Services Facebook page for more information. If you are in need of extra support over the holidays, please reach out via phone (860) 535-5015 or email: LTheodore@stonington-ct.gov.

RECREATION

We are excited to announce the return of the **Stonington Rec Youth Basketball League**, a partnership between the Stonington COMO and Stonington Human Services – Recreation Division. REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN for children in grades 3-8! <https://stonington.recdesk.com>

Trailblazing and fundraising are in full throes as **Spellman Park's Disc Golf Course** comes to fruition! Disc Golf is a fun and challenging experience for school-aged children through the golden years. It is available to practically everyone, and is a fantastic lifetime sport! For sponsorship information and/or if you would like to be involved with the planning/design and FUN going forward, please reach out to Rich Ward, Recreation Administrator, at RWard@stonington-ct.gov or (860) 535-5066.

Police Department

On December 11th the annual STUFF A CRUISER event will take place at the PD. This yearly event makes a difference to so many in the community. Please come by with your donations! The Department was also once again honored to continue the tradition, since 1958 (63 years), of giving trophies at the end of the Stonington/Westerly football game. It is a great day for each school and community and full of tradition and memories.

The Department was also very excited, to once again, help escort the SHS Boys Soccer Team who won their State Championship Game with our Fire & EMS partners!

The Department is again participating in NO SHAVE NOVEMBER! They are raising money for the Connecticut Cancer Foundation, led by our Team Captain, Officer Discordia. Help us pass our goal; any amount helps. Use the link [here](#) to donate. Thank you for your support! Be on the look out for some fun pictures at the end of the month to see who grew the best beard!

Planning Department

Sidewalks

Since our October update, one additional easement has been signed (Seventeen easements have been granted to the Town in total) and one more has committed to sign. Three sets of landscaping rights will be needed on a temporary basis for the project as well. The Army Corps Permit and Inland Wetlands Permit have both been approved. The State of Connecticut Department of Transportation is currently reviewing the entire project for a state highway encroachment permit since Route 1 is a state road. The review has revealed that many of the existing handicapped accessible ramps are not in compliance. The State DOT will require

the town to approach each of these owners and update them as part of the project. Unfortunately, this will add approximately \$175,000 - \$225,000 to the project and add an additional engineering phase, as well as negotiating with each property owner for these additional easements and permissions to work on their property. The Town intends to move forward this winter with an additional review by the Town's Police Commission as well as putting together bidding packages. The Town will be advertising for contractors in early Spring and would appreciate it if anyone holding an outstanding set of easement paperwork to contact Susan Cullen, AICP, Director of Economic and Community Development at scullen@stonington-ct.gov

Zoning Regulations Comprehensive Update

A request for proposals was advertised in early autumn for a consultant to assist the Town with the review and update of the Zoning Regulations. Multiple consultants have applied and those packages are currently being reviewed, rated and ranked. A consultant will be chosen this winter and work on this effort will begin in early Spring. This is expected to be a two-year process so please stay engaged with us on this exciting journey.

Donahue Park Extension North - Riverwalk Project Design

Thanks to efforts from one of the Economic Development Commission members, the Town was able to submit a grant this month, requesting funds for engineering design on a potential extension of the Donahue Park Riverwalk. The design work would provide financial cost estimates and other relevant details that are needed to kick off a broader engagement of stakeholders and residents for this potential project in the commercial district of Pawcatuck.

Public Works

DPW is working proactively to maintain and improve its public infrastructure, facilities, parks and recreation areas. Below is a list of some of the work that happened in November across the Town. Please join us in thanking DPW if you see them out and around!

- Construction of the pad and electrical conduit for the Lobster Trap Tree at the Stonington Town Dock.
- Town wide paving, including a portion of Al Harvey Road.
- Fourth District Hall Exterior Building Repair.
- Holiday Decorations in Downtown Pawcatuck.
- Emergency Tornado response, including tree and brush cleanup.
- Winterization of the Town's turf athletic fields.
- Town-wide sidewalk repair, such as Wolford Court and Stillman Ave.
- Transfer Station building repairs, including roof replacement.
- Winter response equipment preparation.
- Removal of failed street lights on the Stonington Viaduct Bridge.

The Engineering Department has also been very busy with a range of projects, from site plan reviews to ongoing work on our town-wide bridge inventory. Drainage work is underway at the Fourth District Voting Hall. On 11/22/2021, construction commenced to include the installation of a Tidal Valve Gate, box culverts and (2) rain gardens. In addition, construction of the roadside swale and basin(s) were completed on Taugwonk Road and various other drainage projects are in early stages of design. Both the Town Hall & Human Services are in the final stage of roof replacement. While material and trade industry shortages have prolonged the timeline of the construction activities, we are so grateful to have these long-awaited projects nearly completed.

Solid Waste and Recycling

We are so excited to share the Town has qualified to move up from the *Phase I-Expression of Interest* phase of the Sustainable Materials Management (SSM) Grant Program to the second phase. As mentioned in our October update, the grant is for a town-wide curbside food scrap pilot program to complement our current Unit Based Pricing (UBP- ‘yellow bag’) system. We believe this could be an excellent opportunity for Stonington to continue in its leadership on solid waste within the State, as UBP is both an environmental and financial success. The towns annual per capita disposal is approximately 380 lbs and with a curbside food waste opportunity we believe per capita disposal will shrink to about 200 lbs per person. The average for other CT Towns without UBP is 740 lbs per person per year (2020). UBP has proven to reduce disposal costs by as much as 45-60%. It is also an equitable way of charging for waste disposal. For Stonington, residents pay about 70% of the taxes; however, the commercial sector generates approximately 65% of the amount of waste shipped for disposal. With this program, residents pay only for the garbage they produce.

Speaking of UBP, Stonington has contracted for a newly designed Stonington Yellow Bag, manufactured here in the USA. Unfortunately, there have been several challenges with the roll out of the new bag. We have been working closely with the manufacturer to remove any defective product, replace it, and correct the problem going forward.

If you find that you have purchased defective bags, please return them either to the store where they were purchased or to the Solid Waste Office located at the Town Hall for an exchange. We are very sorry for this inconvenience and please feel free to contact us if you have any further problems. Thank you for your patience while we correct the issues.

Onto more positive news-- the reuse shed is back in operation after some much needed repairs, including replacement of the entrance ramp to meet ADA requirements. Other improvements include a new roof and other structural repairs.

Tax Collector

The 2nd installment of real estate taxes is coming due January 1, 2022 and is delinquent after February 1, 2022. We do NOT rebill for the 2nd installment. The July bill came in three parts – July payment, January payment and taxpayer copy. Please note that the 2nd installment is less than the first because fire district taxes were paid in July. Also, motor vehicle supplemental bills will be mailed out toward the end of December. Taxpayers who registered a car after October 1, 2020 will typically receive one. To make your payment, you can come to Town Hall, mail your payment or pay online. The Department is also happy to answer any questions you may have (860-535-5080).

Town Clerk

Both the Town Clerk's Office, as well as our Registrars of Voters, were very busy with the November elections. In addition to all the regular work of this department, ranging from issuing licenses, assisting in land records and genealogy research, and keeping our Board and Commission meeting minutes and agendas updated. We are in the process of saying goodbye to our amazing, longstanding Town Clerk, Cindy Ladwig. After 44 years of service, Cindy has decided to retire. We had the opportunity to celebrate Cindy's years of dedicated service this month, and also welcome our newly elected Town Clerk (and long serving member of the Town Clerk office team) Sally Duplice.

Water Pollution Control Authority

The WPCA had an exciting fall as the Diversion Project was completed and we began to transfer a percentage of the Mystic flows to our Borough Facility, enabling the WPCA Board to allow 50,000 gallons per day of additional flows into the Mystic sewer shed. This has resulted in granting sewer connections to projects that had been on a waiting list to connect.

In addition, a major leak into the Mystic sewer system was identified and repaired. An old six-inch sewer line had broken allowing flow from the Mystic River to enter the sewer system during high tides. This was a huge find for the WPCA, discovered from metering data done in the first Phase of our I&I project. We are now moving into Phase Two of that study, which is expected to identify other areas where ground water is making its way into the sewer system and using up vital capacity.

Thank you for reading our update and we are looking forward to another productive month! Thank you, Stonington!